



BONE STRENGTH FOR LIFE

Your body is made up of more than 200 bones. Bones are important because they support your whole body and everything you do – from just standing to running, jumping, writing, and even playing the piano. Bones are made up of collagen, a protein that helps support bones, and calcium phosphate, a mineral that makes bones hard. Bones are also made up of water, other minerals, and living cells that grow and change. Bones are always growing and they are strongest by your 20s, which is why you have to work hard to build your bone strength now. How? By eating and drinking foods that have calcium and doing enough weight-bearing physical activity.

Physical activity

Weight-bearing activities like walking and playing soccer make your bones work against gravity, the force that helps pull us toward the ground. This activity makes muscles stronger. With muscles pushing and pulling against bones, bones become stronger. Weight-bearing activity also sparks new bone tissue to form, making them stronger.



Some weight-bearing activities:

- ★ Dancing
- ★ Lifting weights
- ★ Tennis
- ★ Jump rope
- ★ Hiking
- ★ Running
- ★ Karate or tae kwon do
- ★ Push-ups
- ★ Hopscotch

What's not weight-bearing activity? Swimming and bike riding are great exercise for your heart and other muscles in your body, but they don't count as bone building activity.

To make sure your bones stay strong, you need to get plenty of calcium every day. Check food labels to see how much calcium there is, and do your best to choose foods that add up to 1300 milligrams every day.

Calcium

When your body makes new bone tissue, it starts with a framework of collagen. Small, hard calcium crystals from your blood then fill the nooks and crannies of your collagen framework. Together, calcium and collagen make bones strong and flexible. Calcium is important to other parts of your body, but it is especially important to your bones.

Foods that are high in calcium:

Talk to your parents about checking labels for calcium at the grocery store. Even though dairy products are the best source, there are also lots of other foods that have calcium, such as broccoli and beans.



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